LETTERS

At the Mutla Ridge: The Rest of the Story

Dear Sir:

Periodical distribution to Europe being a bit slow, I have just received the May-June issue of *ARMOR*. A quick comment on LTC John Antal's article, "It's Not the Speed of the Computer That Counts!"

I had hoped John would capture at the end of his piece the anecdotal "so what" of the opening paragraph's lead-in on the Tiger Brigade's oral frag orders episode preceding the attack of the Mutla Ridge on the 26/27 of April 1991, but he didn't, so I will try here to give just a little Paul Harvey(ish) "the rest of the story."

The plan did, indeed, change a number of times as the 2nd Marine Division and the MEF received late and conflicting information on the Iraqi scramble to "get outta Dodge" with all their pillage and loot. Information was also slow, and required various layers of checking on the movements and intentions of the Syrian, Eygptian, Saudi, and Kuwaiti forces allied into Joint Force Coalition North to the Brigade's west. This meant that all commanders in the Tiger Battle Team needed to be as situationally aware as possible on that very smoke-, dust-, and information-obscured battlefield. This necessitated detailed knowledge of the original plan, which included numerous branches and sequels, all of which had been thoroughly rehearsed at every level. They also needed to be well schooled in the SOP battle drills of the brigade, and each of the battalions. These had, of course, been trained and trained in all weather, day and night... repeatedly! Thus, situational awareness based on good battalion and brigade radio and physical crosstalk, net "eavesdropping" SOPs, and timely oral orders combined with simple, standardized battle drills and allowed that particular dynamic battlefield to be a successful one, where fratricide did not occur, and the mission, albeit a multiply changed one, was accomplished!

You might also note that COL (then MAJ) Bobby Williams was the superb S3 of the "Hounds of Hell" (3-67 AR), not the Tiger Brigade. COL (then MAJ) Mike Obermeyer was the guy who "kept me straight" as "Tiger 3"!

J.B. SYLVESTER
MG (then COL), USA
(then) "Tiger 6"!

Single Best Solution May Be The Enemy of the Good

Dear Sir:

In reference to the article, "It's Not the Speed of the Computer That Counts," by LTC John Antal, which appeared in the May-June issue: First, I wish to commend LTC Antal for his very interesting and instructive article on a very important subject — decision-making by a commander. Second, I agree that there are two ways for a commander and staff to employ decision-making. There is analytical decision-making, where the commander's staff plays the dominant role, and the staff follows a systematic, step-by-step approach to determine a *single best solution*. It is the concept of a *single best solution* that I disagree with. I would substitute "choosing a *good* solution, rather than single *best* solution." Searching for the *single best solution* implies that there is such an ideal solution to a situation of so many variables that it would defy geniuses. Since it is rare to find staff officers of genius quality, it is more practical and humanly possible to recommend to the commander *a good solution*, rather than the arrogant and pompous *single best solution.* Prussian staffs and commanders should always keep in mind an important principle of operations in the field, the principle of simplicity, wherein "direct, simple plans and clear, concise orders reduce misunderstanding and confusion. Other factors being equal, the simplest plan is preferred." (From 5-11, Principle of Simplicity, *FM 100-5, Operations,* Sept. 1968.)

(The alternative is) *recognitional* decision-making, wherein the commander plays the major role in decision-making while his staff focuses its efforts on implementing his decision, rather than searching for a *single best solution.* The commander uses his knowledge of the combat situation, and the latest reports on the enemy, terrain, and friendly forces, to rapidly decide on one specific (I prefer to state it as "*one good solution*") course of action.

I also believe it would be more appropriate (and less confusing) to call this "Recognition Decision-Making" by its original name, "The Commander's Estimate of the Situation," and not by this high-falutin' name of "Recognitional Decision-Making." Here again, the application of the principle of simplicity should encourage us to use the simplest terms in our lexicon of military terms.

The commander's estimate of the situation and the troop leading procedures have been outlined in various manuals and convenient pocket-sized cards. One which I still carry around is entitled, "Small Unit Leader's Card: Troop Leading Steps," printed as GTA 21-2-5, 15 December 1967.... It was an attempt to instill a systematized, logical way to think when arriving at rapid decision-making in COMBAT; and also served as a checklist when issuing a complete combat order, as well as a checklist for troop leading steps. I should add that such aids for combat leaders served well for assistant squad leaders on up the ranks to regimental (brigade) commanders in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

In essence, I agree wholeheartedly with his statement that "It's not the speed of the computer that counts," but rather the lightning speed of the human brain to attain "rapid battlefield decision-making." Indeed, I learned the Commander's Estimate of the Situation as a plebe at West Point, and it served me well as a commander and staff officer in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. I practiced using the Estimate of the Situation over 30 years, so that as a brigade commander in Vietnam, I could make an estimate in a matter of seconds and, indeed, I made such estimates almost automatically. This, I believe, was the single most important thing that permitted me and my command to attain success in combat.

I wish to thank LTC Antal for his highly professional article on a very, very important subject.

DUQUESNE A. WOLF
COL, Retired
Niceville, Fla.

The Challenge of Protecting Light Armored Vehicles

Dear Sir:

Back in 1972, under the leadership of Col. Charlie Lehner and Dr. Chuck Church of DARPA, a few of us, including Dick Ogorkiewicz, considered the future for armored vehicles in the post-1995 time frame. In 1974, we considered what would be needed to face the various threats of 1995 and beyond. Believe it or not, even back then one could see from the literature that the primary threat to rapidly deployed air-mobile light vehicles was the precision-strike munition.

My series of articles on tanks, armor, and armor penetrators (to include mines) in the early 1980s included many things that still should be considered for a baseline before going off to "revolutionize" the battlefield with "new concepts." In brief, look back to these, to the books by Richard Simpkin, the many articles by Dick Ogorkiewicz, and others before reinventing either the threat, the scenario, or the "new concept." For example, at the end of the series on mines, you will find the mention of anti-helicopter mines. If you search back through books and articles, you will find that the U.K., Germany, and some in the U.S. Army War College were thinking "Vietnam-like" thoughts about "new revolutionary mobile warfare" based on armed, armored helicopters in the early 1980s. (Believe it or not, these people had missed an article in *ARMOR* Magazine, "HIND, A Legacy from Lenin," (January-February 1979, pp. 10-12), which used "the numbers" to show that the HIND was already basically an airborne BMP!) However, the show-stopper was a simple question with which I interrupted General von Senger und Etterlin: "Sir, have you considered anti-helicopter mines." They had not. Everyone now also knows the story of HINDs in Afghanistan... and how they were brought down by Stingers.

We considered many things to make a light armored vehicle for the scenarios that you are now wrestling with in *ARMOR*. One of the things that I mentioned in my article of May-June 1983 is that spaced armors need not always have all their components installed at all times. This can keep the enemy guessing both before and during a conflict, creating the essential element of doubt. (I

would also like to add that, as early as 1980 for Ford Aerospace, we demonstrated missile warheads having capabilites far beyond those which have made it through the R&D cycles around the world. In fact, many of today's anti-armor warheads use some of the things that we created and tested. [Don Kennedy (another old *ARMOR* Magazine contributor) and I did create the warhead section and lethality methodology for Rockwell's 1976 proposal for development of Hellfire. Not all our design niceties have ever yet been used.])

The bottom line is that we can make weapons that can turn anything inside out, and there are more than a few people like us around the world. Thus, you cannot make any armored vehicle invulnerable... you can only have local invulnerability based on the scenario. This, in turn, is the key to light, airmobile, ground-mobile armored vehicles — only insert the armor needed to accomplish the mission. And if that means that you need heavy armor, then insert it after you establish the "beachhead" through massive firepower and speed of arrival. (By the way, if you really think about it, we had to wait until we rolled up the appropriate armor and weapons before starting Desert Storm. Same principle, different time scale.) I am speaking about having spaced armor arrays into which one can place additional armor panels when needed to perform the mission. Obviously, the armored vehicle would be lighter without these panels..... resulting in it being more airmobile... but, the enemy would not especially know whether the panels were in there or not. If heavy armor — i.e. the additional panels are needed, then these panels can be flown in later and inserted in the first vehicles when they rearm... or into the vehicles of the second, third, etc. wave when they land... if the scenario permits.

The other problem that one faces is the "long smoke pole." As much as I like big guns...a much different suite is needed for light mobile armored vehicles. Such options were mentioned in the May-June 1983 issue. However, basically two weapons are needed, a primary weapon for killing people, and a secondary weapon for killing everything (and I mean everything) else.

With today's technology, the primary weapon should be an automatic gun/mortar of 80 to 100-mm caliber. (May sound familiar.) Munitions technologies can easily make this capable of carrying out all antipersonnel activities, even to include the use of non-lethal munitions. Munitions can also be included for both direct and indirect fire kill of buildings and enemy materiel, to include other light armored vehicles.

The secondary weapon system, as also mentioned in 1983, should be a bank or two of vertically launched missiles capable of using their warheads to stop precision-strike munitions, recon aircraft, armed armored gunships, and [by plunging fire] heavily armored tanks. The arrangement might be similar to that in current naval vessels in the form of a single bank in the rear or possibly as rows along the sides of the vehicle. With today's computer technologies and rocket propulsion from ballistic missile interceptors, all the rounds should be "at the ready" — one might need to simultaneously launch all of them to stop three ATGMS, a laser guided projectile, and that pesky "fly-in-the-sky" — and who is the person who really cares how many they shoot so long as they live and finish the mission?

Finally, some references to seek out:

Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare,* Brassey's Defence Publishers, Oxford, England, 1985, ISBN 0-08-031170-9.

Richard E. Simpkin, *Antitank: An Air-mechanized Response to Armored Threats in the 90s*, Brassey's Defence Publishers, Oxford, England, 1982, ISBN 0-08-027036-0.

Richard Simpkin, "Flying Tanks? - a tactical-technical analysis of the 'main battle air vehicle' concept," *Military Technology,* MILTECH 8/84, pp. 62-80.

JOE BACKOFEN
via email

"Keep *ARMOR* Coming In Readable, Paper Form"

Dear Sir:

I'm a civilian who has never been in the service. My lack of real-world military experience does nothing to lessen my excitement each time I see that paper cover arrive in the mail. I have just received the latest issue of *ARMOR* and want to comment on "Stand To." Hooray for you!

I have been an avid reader of *ARMOR* for several years. *ARMOR* was a great source of reference for me when I inked my first novel: *Reasonable Sufficiency*. I say hooray for you and your commitment to keep *ARMOR* coming in readable, paper form.

I work in the data processing industry for the world's largest producer of dry pet food here in St. Louis, and I am very close to the dealings of electronic media vs. paper. As a techno-nerd, I am aware of the benefits of computers, and their pitfalls. As a writer and researcher, I know the value of paper as a media. Most of our vendors no longer supply manuals. Everything comes on CD, and it just isn't the same.

"They had a good idea then. And it may still be." I reiterate your words and add: They had a GREAT idea then, and it is still the best, most helpful way to produce *ARMOR* magazine. Keep up the great work!

DAVE GLUECK
Via email

Let's Keep a Product We Can Touch, Read, and Pass On

Dear Sir:

I have never written to a publication but I feel compelled to stand with you in support of tradition and practicality in the information age. *ARMOR* is one of the most valued written products I receive. I anxiously await each new issue, and along with my comrades discuss latest trends and developments in our profession. I am a National Guard Tanker, 5-112th Armor to be exact, and our publication keeps us all tethered together — active component and reserve component. It fills in our education, when funding or circumstances do not allow formal schooling. Lately, the 3d Bde, 49AD went through the excellent Warfighter training program, which exercised the military decision-making process. This taught us the basics, but imagine my pleasure to pick up *ARMOR* this month and learn about an abbreviated process to enhance what we already learned (thank you, LTC Antal!). Sir, this is only possible through this written product. The Internet is great, but let's keep a product that we can touch, feel, read, and read again. In 20 years, I want to be able to pass along this product to young tankers and cavalrymen, as it has been passed to us.

TERRY WHITLEY
CPT, Armor, TXARNG

We Have a Better System Than Tanks For the Indirect Fire Role

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to Mr. Loughlin's letter in the May-June 1998 issue, commenting on my letter in the November-December 1997 issue, regarding TERM munitions.

Evidently, Mr. Loughlin completely missed my point. I did not challenge the technical advances or capabilities of artillery-like guided projectiles to successfully attack and destroy tanks and other armored vehicles. What I challenged is the supposed need of turning the main battle tank (MBT) into an indirect fire artillery piece when more suitable systems are already available.

If technology reaches the point where armored self-propelled (SP) mortar carriers, artillery, and missile launchers can destroy enemy tanks long before the latter reach direct fire range, then we will need fewer MBTs and should have more of these SP indirect firing systems instead. This is completely different from the proposed TERM concept of giving tanks a dual-role capability.

Regarding Mr. Loughlin's comment, "the military likes to believe that tactics and strategy drive technology," I have no clue how he developed such an opinion. Tactics and strategy have always had to adjust to new technology (though there is often a lag time during which a lot of troops get slaughtered until the leaders figure out the new rules). Regardless, the solution has almost always been found in closer coordination of combined arms. Attempts to have one system "do it all" or "go it alone" have invariably failed.

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The real challenge has always been to incorporate new technical capabilities into a cohesive operational concept and not simply jump onto any new technical gizmo as if it were a panacea that will change the face of land warfare as we know it.

CHESTER A. KOJRO
LTC, Armor, USAR
Rolla, Mo.

The Search for a Scout Vehicle

Dear Sir:

In reference to Col. Melton's letter in the March-April issue, I would like to talk about the armor scout. It seems, for years, armor doctrine has not considered him an important asset.

We have had dismounted or mounted scouts in the Army since the American Revolution. He was very important in the Civil and Indian Wars. The scout did his job well in radio and machine gun jeeps in World War II and Korea. After Korea, we tried to give the scout more protection than his armor vest. The M-114 was a disaster as a scout vehicle. We even put a 20mm gun on it, and it was a greater disaster.

The scout vehicle development program (XM-808) was terminated in favor of the M1CV (Bradley) program. Does anyone out there believe the M3 could have ever been a real scout vehicle? It is a fighting machine for armored cavalry, a very powerful one, but it will never be a scout vehicle. Did we ever believe that the super intelligent gathering devices from space would replace the ground scout in real time? I think there are those who did, but they were mistaken. There are rules for ground scouts that go back a very long, long way.

Ground reconnaissance is obtained by continuous operation, by movement in all kinds of weather, night and day. The mission is observation and reporting.

Reconnaissance sections or teams work in pairs. One covers the advance of the other when it reconnoiters while the other stands guard ready to cover a withdrawal by fire if necessary. Scouts must lie in wait and watch, often for a long time.

All scouts should keep their eyes, ears, and weapons trained on the most likely positions of ambush. The enemy knows if he opens fire on a scout team, a communication button is going to be pressed even before a death blow can be made.

Scouts must avoid combat unless it is necessary to escape.

The rule in meeting resistance by fire is 1) take cover, 2) relay information, 3) run like hell!!!

If armor scout elements are expected to fight a decisive engagement, they are not being used correctly. We need very *current* information so commanders can determine what might be a decisive action. The human scout is still indispensable.

The HMMWV is a proven vehicle, but is it a scout's mount? I would like to know what the present scout leaders think about this. I realize the UAVs are going to be a great tool for scouting, but they are not the full solution.

I wonder what happened to the small Cadillac Gage "Commando Scout." It was an armored, 7-ton, high speed, four-wheel drive vehicle that had excellent mobility. As I remember, it had machine guns only. I would have thought that after what we learned in "Desert Storm" about the need for ground reconnaissance scouts, we might have taken another look at the "Commando Scout" as a scout's mount.

Thank you for the space in your fine journal.

ARTHUR T. BENSON
An old Armor Scout Leader